

**WASHINGTON, DC** - Today Congressman Rob Wittman, who serves as a member of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission joined other Commission members in approving the purchase of easements along Cat Point Creek. \$3.5 million in grants and matching donations will enable 1,246 acres of the watershed to become part of the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

"I'm pleased to see two of my great passions come together with this purchase as we seek to preserve waterfowl habitats and take steps to improve the water quality of a vital tributary to the Bay", said Wittman.

Wittman has long been an advocate for the preservation of portions of the Cat Point Creek, starting as a co-founder of the Cat Point Creek Watershed Committee. The Committee in the past has endorsed efforts to preserve wildlife habitats along the creek.

"As a long time outdoorsman and resident of the Northern Neck, I know these easements will play a fantastic role in the preservation of habitats and historic lands, for both waterfowl and man alike", added Wittman.

The protection of wetlands and the adjoining uplands on Cat Point Creek contributes to the goals of local, State, and National planning documents. Specifically, the Cat Point Creek Watershed Management Plan calls for increasing wildlife corridors along both banks of the creek. While the Virginia Wildlife Action Plan seeks to conserve coastal marsh birds by protecting "forest buffers and other upland management areas surrounding the marsh." Additionally, two of the properties lie along the Captain John Smith National Historic Trail, the Nation's first national water trail. The lands protected under the wildlife conservation easement will remain in private ownership and will generally not be open to unrestricted public use.

*The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission was established on February 18, 1929, by the passage of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act. It was created and authorized to consider and approve any areas of land and/or water recommended by the Secretary of the Interior for*

*purchase or rental by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and to fix the price or prices at which such areas may be purchased or rented. In addition to approving purchase and rental prices, the Commission considers the establishment of new wildlife refuges.*

*Wittman serves alongside the Secretaries of the Interior Ken Salazar and Agriculture Tom Vilsack, Senators Thad Cochran (R-MS) and Blanche Lincoln (D-AK) and Congressman John Dingell (D-MI) on the Commission.*